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OFFICIAL DONATION.

U. S. Office of public buildings and grounds.

PLANS FOR TREATMENT OF THAT PORTION OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SOUTH OF PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE AND NORTH OF B STREET SW., AND FOR A CONNECTION BETWEEN POTOMAC AND ZOOLOGICAL PARKS.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

TRANSMITTING,

WITH A LETTER FROM THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, REPORT OF EXAMINATION AND ESTIMATES OF COST FOR TREATMENT OF THAT PORTION OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SOUTH OF PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE AND NORTH OF B STREET SW., AND FOR A CONNECTION BETWEEN POTOMAC AND ZOOLOGICAL PARKS.

DECEMBER 6, 1900.—Referred to the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds and ordered to be printed.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, December 5, 1900.

SIR: Pursuant to the provisions of the act of Congress approved June 6, 1900 (Public, No. 163), I have the honor to transmit herewith copy of a letter from the Chief of Engineers, United States Army, dated November 30, ultimo, together with copy of a report from Col. Theo. A. Bingham, submitting plans, estimate of cost, etc., for the treatment of that section of the District of Columbia situated south of Pennsylvania avenue and north of B street SW., and for a suitable connection between the Potomac and Zoological parks.

I beg to call special attention to these plans and urgently recommend favorable consideration and action.

Very respectfully,

ELIHU ROOT,
Secretary of War.

THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS,
UNITED STATES ARMY,
Washington, November 30, 1900.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith in duplicate a report submitting plans for the treatment of that section of the District of Columbia situated south of Pennsylvania avenue and north of B street

SW., and for a suitable connection between the Potomac and Zoological parks.

This examination was made in accordance with the terms of the act of Congress approved June 6, 1900 (Public, No. 163), which provides as follows:

The Chief of Engineers of the United States Army is authorized to make an examination and to report to Congress on the first Monday in December, nineteen hundred, plans for the treatment of that section of the District of Columbia situated south of Pennsylvania Avenue and north of B street southwest, and for a suitable connection between the Potomac and Zoological parks, and in making such examinations and plans he is authorized to employ a landscape architect of conspicuous ability in his profession; for services and expenses incident to said examination and report the sum of four thousand dollars is hereby appropriated.

The immediate supervision of this work was assigned to Col. T. A. Bingham, United States Army, major, Corps of Engineers, the officer in charge of public buildings and grounds in the District of Columbia, and after careful inquiry, Mr. Samuel Parsons, jr., of New York, a landscape architect of conspicuous ability, was invited to make a study of the section of the District of Columbia under consideration and to prepare a plan and report, outlining a scheme for a park and boulevard connecting the United States Capitol, the Washington Monument, the Potomac and Zoological parks.

Mr. Parsons accepted the invitation and brought to the work that genius, energy, ability, and devotion to his profession worthy of a landscape architect of conspicuous ability.

His report is clear and concise, and his suggestions meet with my cordial approval.

When the subject comes up for action before the proper Congressional committee, I trust that Mr. Parsons may have an opportunity to personally explain more in detail the broad and comprehensive plan he now submits.

The act of Congress made no provision for an estimate, but an approximate statement of the probable cost of a portion of this great work is submitted by Colonel Bingham. This, however, does not include the value of the area required between Pennsylvania avenue and B street north, nor of the area included in Mr. Parsons's plan south of B street southwest, with the improvements thereon, nor of the area with improvements thereon between Twenty-second and Twenty-fourth streets deemed necessary for a suitable connection between the Potomac and Zoological parks.

In my judgment the plans suggested by Mr. Parsons, if fully carried out, will give to the capital of the nation a park system second to that of no city on the globe.

Commending the plans and report to the favorable consideration of Congress, I suggest that early action shall be taken toward initiating this great enterprise by securing for the Government the title to the land required.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN M. WILSON,
Brig. Gen., Chief of Engineers,
U. S. Army.

Hon. ELIHU ROOT,
Secretary of War.

PLANS FOR TREATMENT OF THAT PORTION OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SOUTH OF PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE AND NORTH OF B STREET SW., AND FOR A CONNECTION BETWEEN POTOMAC AND ZOOLOGICAL PARKS.

OFFICE OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS,
Washington, November 15, 1900.

GENERAL: In the sundry civil act approved June 6, 1900—

The Chief of Engineers of the United States Army is authorized to make an examination and to report to Congress on the first Monday in December, nineteen hundred, plans for the treatment of that section of the District of Columbia situated south of Pennsylvania avenue and north of B street southwest, and for a suitable connection between the Potomac and the Zoological Parks, and in making such examinations and plans he is authorized to employ a landscape architect of conspicuous ability in his profession.

The duty of carrying out this provision of the law was assigned to me by letter from the Chief of Engineers, United States Army, dated June 20, 1900, and its execution at once undertaken. The advice of competent professional advisers was sought in order to ascertain what gentlemen were, without any doubt, regarded by the profession as landscape architects of "conspicuous ability." By the 20th of July, 1900, a preliminary agreement had been reached with the firm of which Mr. Samuel Parsons, jr., of New York City, is the senior partner, the firm name being Parsons & Pentecost. Mr. Parsons was at the time in Europe, but the preliminary work of discussion was completed by the time he returned, early in August, and by August 22 the work had been definitely assigned to Mr. Parsons. Since that date this work has been vigorously pressed, and I now have the honor to transmit herewith Mr. Parsons's report, dated November 14, 1900, together with accompanying map. Several detail drawings and perspectives and also a model are still to arrive, which Mr. Parsons has been unable to get completed at this date.

It is a pleasure to bear testimony to the interest and enthusiasm with which Mr. Parsons and his partner have approached the problem presented to them, and I think it will be evident that the results of their work are worthy of the capital city of this great nation, and reflect great credit on both gentlemen.

The plan forwarded herewith has been prepared under pressure for time, when the problems involved are considered. For this reason there are some minor points which it is not intended should be carried out exactly as they appear on the drawings. I refer to cases where it would seem as if existing buildings were to be removed for roadways. These minor departures from accuracy are due to the fact that the draftsmen were not personally familiar with the ground they were delineating.

Mr. Parsons has also insisted from the beginning that he was presenting a scheme only in general outline, and that while his drawings illustrate the main points of his scheme, it was impossible, from lack of time, to make it illustrate such final solution as might be found necessary in minor details. He refers to this matter in his report.

The variations of terrain involved in Mr. Parsons's plan are intended to be produced by earth filling, but he presents no estimate as to the quantity of filling required. To obtain this information would require accurate surveys of the whole area involved.

The subject has been gone over in a general way, however, with Mr. Parsons and an approximate estimate is hereto appended.

The value of the triangle bounded by Pennsylvania avenue, Fifteenth street north, and B street north, may be estimated at \$7,500,000. This does not include the other triangular spaces included in Mr. Parsons's plan; and these values must be added to the estimated cost of making the park.

While this is a large amount of money to spend to produce no financial return, its expenditure would, without any doubt, make Washington city far and away the most beautiful capital of the civilized world.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

THEO. A. BINGHAM,
Colonel, United States Army,
Major, Corps of Engineers.

Brig. Gen. JOHN M. WILSON,
Chief of Engineers, U. S. A.

APPROXIMATE ESTIMATE OF THE COST OF BUILDING PARK ON THE MALL, WASHINGTON, D. C., AS DESIGNED BY PARSONS & PENTECOST, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS, NEW YORK CITY.

Grading:

From Capitol to fourth transverse road, 2,253,622 cubic yards, at 20 cents per yard \$450,724.40

Masonry, retaining walls:

First transverse road, 12,316 cubic yards; second transverse road, 14,221 cubic yards; third transverse road, 32,146 cubic yards; fourth transverse road, 34,366 cubic yards—93,049 cubic yards, at \$8..... 744,392.00

Roads:

Drives, 38,340 linear feet, at \$4 \$153,360.00
Gutters, 38,340 linear feet, at \$3 115,020.00
268,380.00

Paths:

Surfacing 41,400 linear feet, at \$1 per foot..... 41,400.00

Bridle paths:

Surfacing 15,000 linear feet, at \$1.50 per foot..... 22,500.00

Drainage:

Lateral system, 38,340 feet of 8-inch pipe, at 30 cents. \$11,502.00

Catch-basins:

10 land basins, at \$10 \$100.00

384 catch-basins for drives, at \$10 each.. 3,840.00

414 catch-basins for paths, at \$6..... 2,484.00

150 catch-basins for paths (bridle), at

\$10 each..... 1,500.00

Total cost of catch-basins 7,924.00

Total cost of drainage..... 19,426.00

Water system:

6,000 feet of 4-inch pipe, at 50 cents per foot \$3,000.00

10,300 feet of 2-inch pipe, at 25 cents per foot 2,575.00

12 hose bibs, at \$10 each..... 120.00

50 hose bibs, at \$3 each..... 150.00
5,845.00

Planting, seeding, finishing, hauling good soil, etc., from Capitol to fourth transverse road, 352 acres, at \$2,000..... 704,000.00

Bridges (masonry):

First transverse road, 5,110 cubic yards, at \$20 per yard \$102,200.00

Second transverse road, 6,000 cubic yards, at \$20 per yard 120,000.00

Bridges (masonry)—Continued.

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| Third transverse road, 6,000 cubic yards, at \$20 per yard | \$120,000.00 |
| Fourth transverse road, 6,000 cubic yards, at \$20 per yard | 120,000.00 |
| | <hr/> |
| | \$462,200.00 |
| Total | 2,718,867.40 |
| Contingencies, 15 per cent | 407,830.11 |
| | <hr/> |
| Grand total | <u>3,126,697.51</u> |

Asphalting and curbing (if desired):

Transverse roads:

| | |
|--|------------|
| First transverse road, 1,000 x 100, 11,111 square yards, at \$2 per yard | 22,222.00 |
| Curbing, 2,000 feet, at \$2 | 4,000.00 |
| Second transverse road, 320,000 square feet, 35,555 square yards, at \$2 per yard | 71,110.00 |
| Curbing, 4,000 feet, at \$2 | 8,000.00 |
| Third transverse road, 3,700 x 160, 592,000 square feet, 65,777 square yards, at \$2 | 131,554.00 |
| Curbing, 7,400 feet, at \$2 | 14,800.00 |
| Fourth transverse road, 4,000 x 160 + 19,652 square feet, 659,652 square feet, 73,295 square yards, at \$2 | 146,590.00 |
| Curbing, 10,000 feet, at \$2 | 20,000.00 |
| | <hr/> |
| Total | 418,276.00 |

REPORT OF MR. SAM'L. PARSONS, JR., LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT.

NEW YORK, *November 14, 1900.*

COLONEL: I have the honor to submit the following report, in accordance with the terms of the agreement made July 16, 1900, wherein under the sundry civil act approved June 6, 1900, "the Chief of Engineers of the United States Army is authorized to make an examination and report to Congress on the first Monday in December, 1900, plans for the treatment of that section of the District of Columbia situated south of Pennsylvania avenue and north of B street SW., and for a suitable connection between the Potomac and the Zoological Parks," and wherein it is also agreed that your landscape architect will prepare plans and reports which "will be purely practical suggestions as to the proper landscape architectural treatment of the ground above mentioned, and will not include working plans or details, but will describe as approximately as possible the lines upon which the work should actually be laid out on the ground."

In seeking to solve the problem of designing a park in the heart of Washington, a park which will be worthy not only of a great city but of a great national capital, it is highly important at the very outset to discover and define the natural limitations that grow out of the original structural lines of the landscape and out of the demands both of the residential and of the business interests of the city.

I think that these propositions will not be denied by persons who have really considered the subject: (1) A park, as a pleasure ground, should be set apart and isolated as completely as art can contrive it from sound and sight of the surrounding city; and (2) On the same line of endeavor the interior of the pleasure ground should be made

to suggest woodland and meadow scenery so laid out as to afford convenient and agreeable access, by means of carriage and bridle roads and footpaths, to all points of interest and landscape charm.

Such a treatment would also assume that while every condition necessary for the comfort and enjoyment of the public should be kept clearly in view, the landscape should be made to take coherent and artistic shape from the original peculiar genius or idiosyncrasy of the place.

Under these terms public buildings could not be generally included as part and parcel of the essential scheme of the park, but they would properly find special territories of their own on the borders of the main pleasure ground, where they could be screened with thickly planted trees, and given a landscape treatment suitable to their character.

Before proceeding to the consideration of the controlling lines of the design, I feel that it would be proper to explain that, in undertaking this work of advice and suggestion, I have endeavored to assume the liberal attitude of the citizen of the United States who, in his earnest desire to secure for his country a noble and perfect park, contributes his keenest endeavors to secure not only the most charming lawns and vistas, but also the best adjustment of steam, electric, and other roads for pleasure and traffic conveyance.

These are days of gigantic national and financial development. I do not think it is asking too much of the general public that it shall assume a sufficiently disinterested attitude to secure for the national capital such an ornament and delight as a great park designed in a noble manner.

In order to explain what I consider an ideal plan, I beg leave to call attention to the peculiarly fortunate outline and configuration of the proposed park. At present it is intended to cover approximately 350 acres, which lie in a space bounded by Pennsylvania avenue and B street SW., with the Capitol looming up at the east, and Washington Monument at the west. An oblong territory occupied mainly by the Botanical Garden, the Mall, the Smithsonian Institute, the Agricultural grounds, and the territory around the Washington Monument, already belongs to the nation, and it is proposed to condemn by law and secure a triangle of land running from Pennsylvania avenue on the north, B street north, on the south, and Fifteenth street on the west. I would suggest that in addition to this land, in order to secure the ideal park, another parcel be acquired, bounded by Maryland avenue on the south, B street on the north, and Fifteenth street on the west; a range which would be wonderfully effective as seen from the base of the Capitol. There the view would widen over a great perspective that would include in its very heart the celebrated vista over almost level ground through grand old trees to the Washington Monument, which would be the very kernel and innermost jewel or shrine of the landscape.

No arrangement could be more fortunate than this. Its steadily widening reach and its unsurpassed vista would make as it were a foreground and park for the Capitol, emphasizing the fact that, owing to the special growth of the city to the west, this side has gained paramount importance.

But the difficulties we shall meet in undertaking to devise such an ideal park will not be overcome by securing sufficient land. There

are existing streets, railroads, buildings, and trees to be considered and suitably treated before the task of designing the park will be complete.

The management of the streets is a difficult problem, if we adhere to the vital principle of isolating the park from the city, and recognize the fact that the grades of the streets can not be materially changed, owing to the proximity of the subjacent water. But the difficulty may be overcome, as shown on the plan, by retaining only cross streets for traffic, and turning them into transverse roads of ample width, screened by embankments of earth surmounted by trees on either side, and connected, at the center of the park and in the exact line of the vista, by bridges arching 20 feet above the present roadbed.

In this scheme most of the pleasure movement would cross the park by slightly curved but tolerably direct drives located close to the transverse roads, and nearly parallel with them, thus carrying out more completely the generally elliptical scheme of the park. This plan, whenever it can be used conveniently, has special artistic value, particularly when, as in this case, a blending veil of shade trees can be made to diversify the slightly formal appearance of the oft-repeated ovals.

This arrangement of drives and masked transverse roads, and bridges kept in close relations with the vistas, it will be readily seen, will naturally force the main scheme of park development into a series of ovals, commencing at the Capitol and extending to the White House, where the same idea is repeated in the already constructed ellipses of the White Lot and the adjacent public territory. It is a fortunate circumstance that the positions of the transverse roads cause the ovals to steadily diminish in size, dropping progressively to lower and lower grades as they approach the Washington Monument. Thus in the widening spread of territory they impart to the landscape a finished and consistent perspective, a harmonious cadence and rhythm of effect, and a finely lengthened appearance of distance.

Raising the bridges and foliage of the hidden transverse roads will likewise tend to give an agreeable undulation to the naturally flat surface of the park, while the changing contours and blending foliage will increase the length of the vista. An adjustment of the roads in this way will tend to give a desirable concavity and breadth to the interior lawns, which are everywhere kept more or less below the levels of the roads, and allowed to wind away from the eye in the long graceful curves of the ellipse; in this point resembling the country roads, that bend and vanish in charming mystery, for it is proposed to screen all these driveways with umbrageous trees.

Outside of the ovals, the simplicity and effectiveness of the symmetry of which constitutes the keynote of the park, we find the drives seeking the points of interest and convenience by long curving lines, which are so arranged as to mass together as much as possible wide stretches of lawn, and in that way increase the large and dignified quality of the design.

Owing to the concentration of the most distinguished park effects about the main vista and ovals, and owing to the proper demand that walks, bridle paths, and drives shall be close to each other so as to afford easy human intercourse, and to avoid the great inconvenience of losing one's way—a risk that accompanies a more wandering, loosely-constructed system—I have placed the roads near the lines of the ellipses. I am convinced a greater variety of effective views can be secured in this way than in any other.

Nor must the need of solitary places be overlooked. For those who wish to wander in seclusion, many walks will be found extending far away from the ovals on other and more remote territory.

The treatment of lawns is simple. It is planned to leave hollows, meadows, and wide expanses of greensward, excepting on either side of the pathways and roads; there the shade of trees is encouraged, and, fortunately, easily attained. Extended masses of foliage already exist, portions of which when displaced by the construction of the transverse roads, can be transplanted, after proper root pruning, to assist in emphasizing and extending the effects of the main vista to the Monument.

One of the most important features of the plan will be found in the new site assigned to the Pennsylvania Railroad station, now a serious obstruction to the development of the new park. Its present location, if retained, would utterly destroy the harmonious arrangement of the ovals and sunken transverse roads, which are the distinguishing characteristics of the present design. The passage of trains through a park, whether over, or under, or on the level, is always to be deprecated. It destroys the restfulness and isolation of the place, and it should be prevented by any arrangement that is not absolutely inimical to the comfort and business necessities of the public. A lightning express is quite incompatible with a green garden and singing birds.

The proposed site for the station, it will be seen, is large and commodious, and situated directly in front of the transverse road at Seventh street, which is made as wide as Pennsylvania avenue, and only 1,600 feet from its nearest borders. The station as now situated, in the heart of the proposed park, would completely destroy the unity of the park design, for it stands at the very point where the loss would be the greatest. Under the new arrangement proposed, every advantage in the way of electric cars and convenient and commodious foot and carriage ways could be secured, as they could all be brought directly under the roof of the station.

I dwell thus strongly on the importance of a new location for the railroad station because I believe that if all parties genuinely and patriotically interested in securing a really great park were thoroughly alive to the real merits of the question, it would be readily conceded that the railroad should be banished to parts where it would be invisible if not wholly inaudible from the main drives of the park, and especially from the bridges over the transverse roads. Its removal is a serious necessity.

Concerning the parkway from Washington Monument to the Potomac and the Zoological parks, it should be said that, as far as the beginning of the precipitous portion of the banks of Rock Creek, a formal arrangement of footpaths, drives, and bridle roads is secured, whereby the house lots are reached by two roads, one on each side of the parkway. The space of 800 feet in the middle is occupied by a park drive, by footpaths and a bridle road, each of which takes a direct course parallel with the adjacent houses, as shown in the accompanying detail plan.

When the park way reaches the steep hillsides of Rock Creek, it is allowed to seek the easiest grades. It occupies a large portion of the picturesque slopes with the winding curves of its drives and bridle paths, ending at the boundaries of the Zoological Park at the junction of Cathedral avenue and Connecticut avenue, where it completes its

There are some things that can be done with the design of a park and some things that can not, if a unified and consistent scheme of treatment is to be evolved; and the more thoroughly and intelligently these possibilities and limitations are studied, the more certain the final successful development of an artistic and enjoyable pleasure ground will become.

In my endeavor to make this report concise, I have necessarily been obliged to omit any enlargement on many points of interest and importance, my object being chiefly to outline the general principles of the scheme, relying on securing at a future time an opportunity to explain the full details of the proposed arrangement.

In conclusion I feel constrained to reaffirm and reemphasize the idea to which, in this report, I have continually endeavored to give expression, namely, that a park is both a work of art and a living phase of nature. The beauties and advantages of each are to be carefully fostered. A fine park is no mechanical or scientific automaton; it is an evolution, an ever-growing, ever-changing, organized creation, from which no single feature can be taken away with impunity. A true park has living functions and peculiarities of construction that the most beautiful picture does not possess, and these should be molded in accordance with its inherent limitations and potentialities for beauty. Let us hope that such a park may yet be one of the chief adornments of our National Capital.

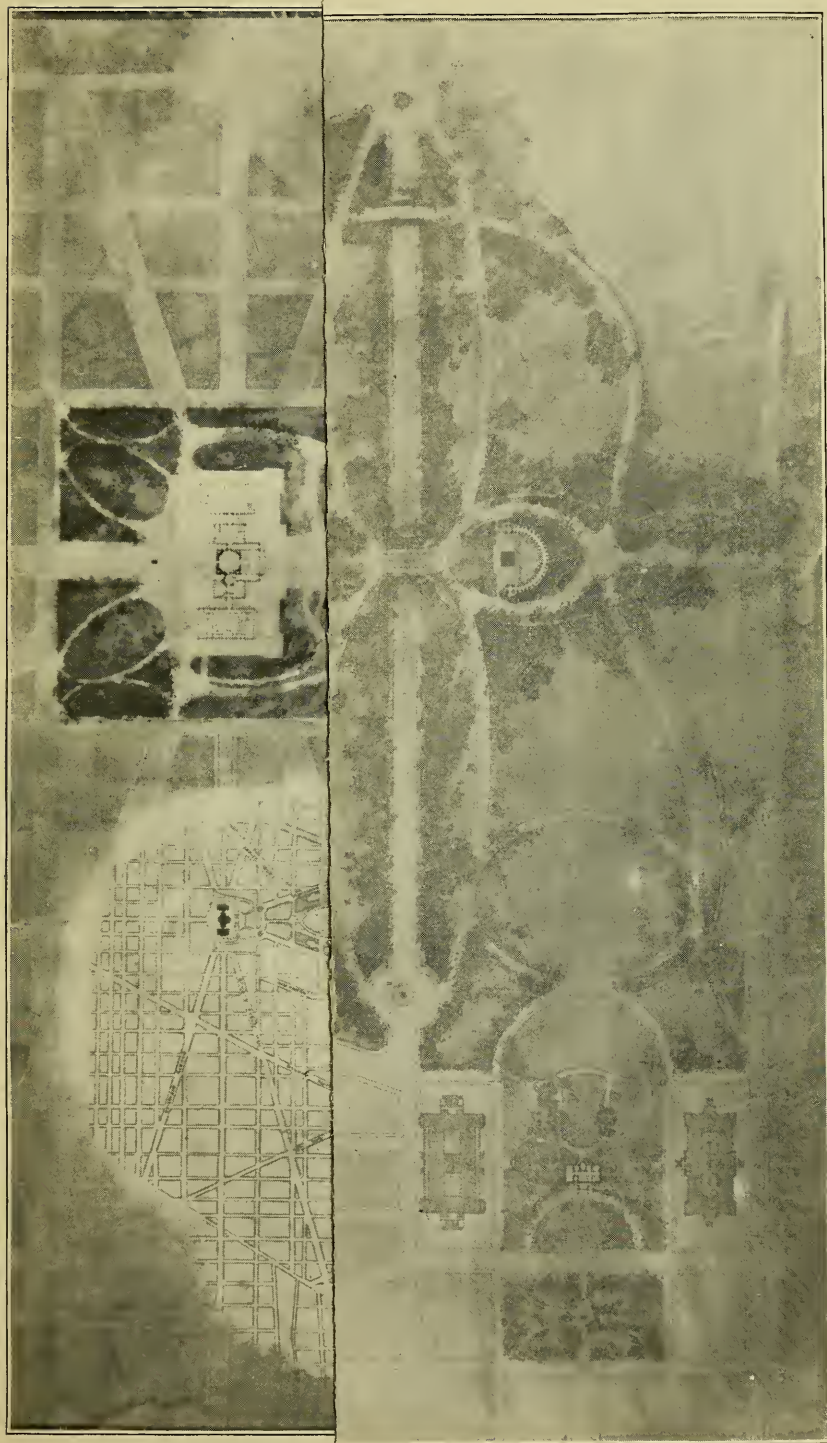
Respectfully,

SAM'L PARSONS, JR.,
Landscape Architect.

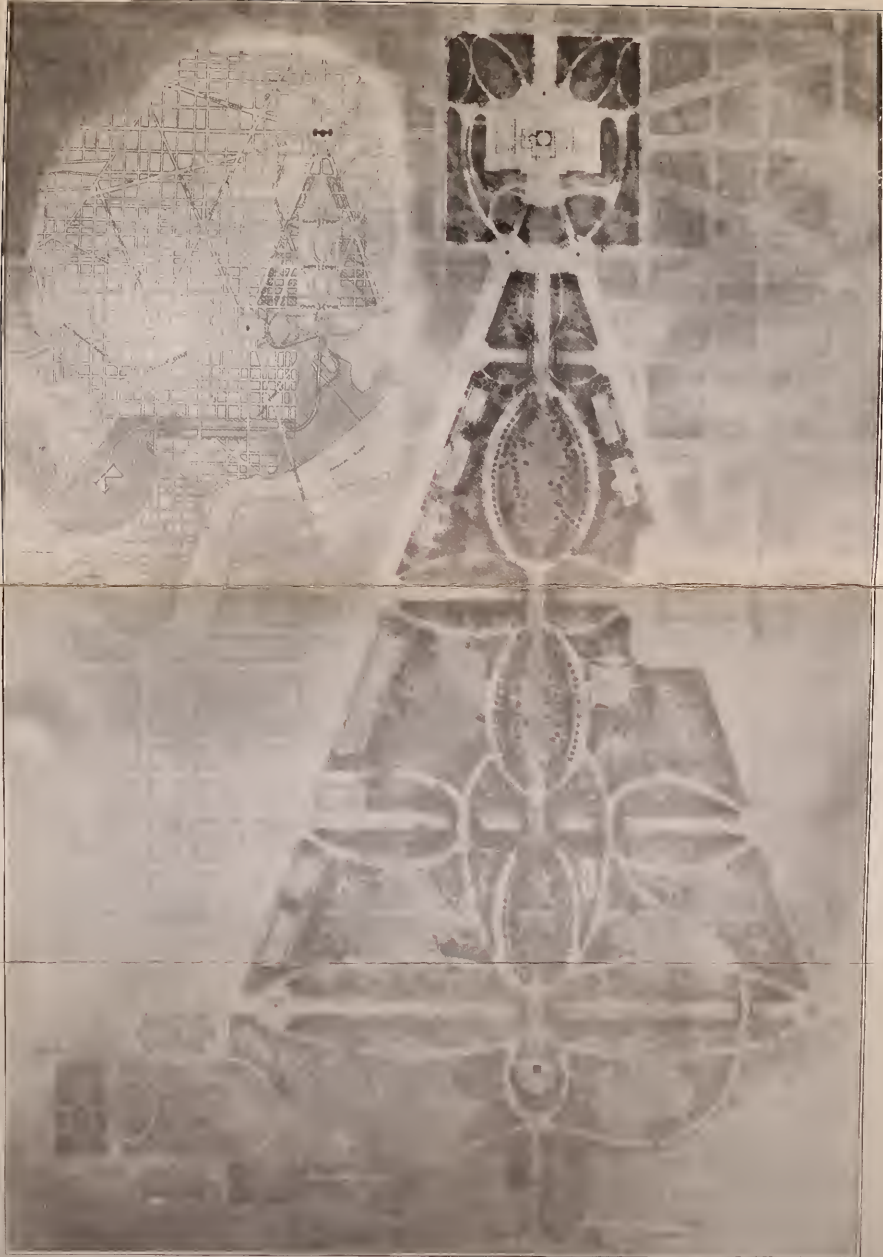
Col. THEODORE A. BINGHAM, U. S. A.,
In Charge Public Buildings and Grounds.

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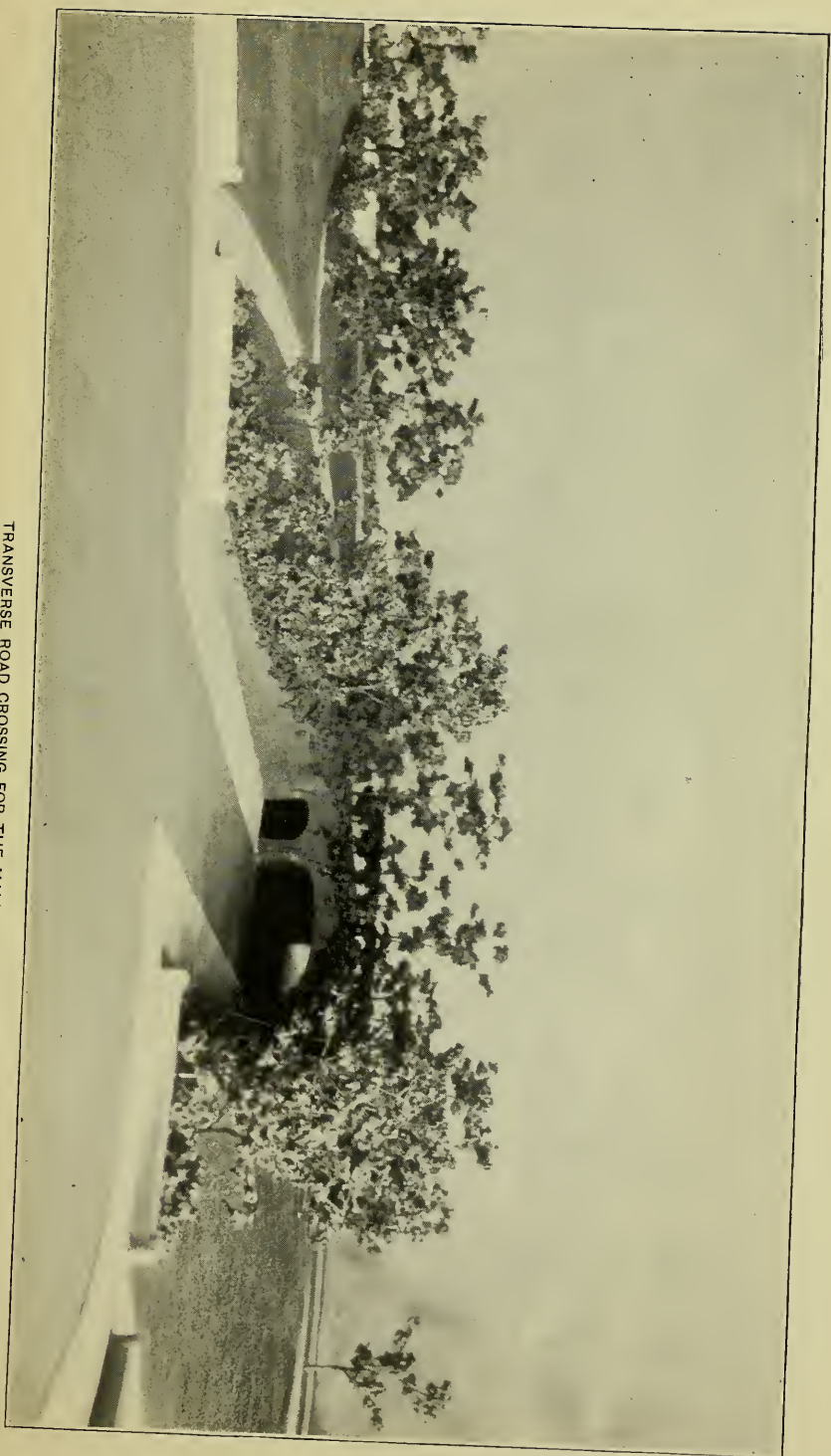


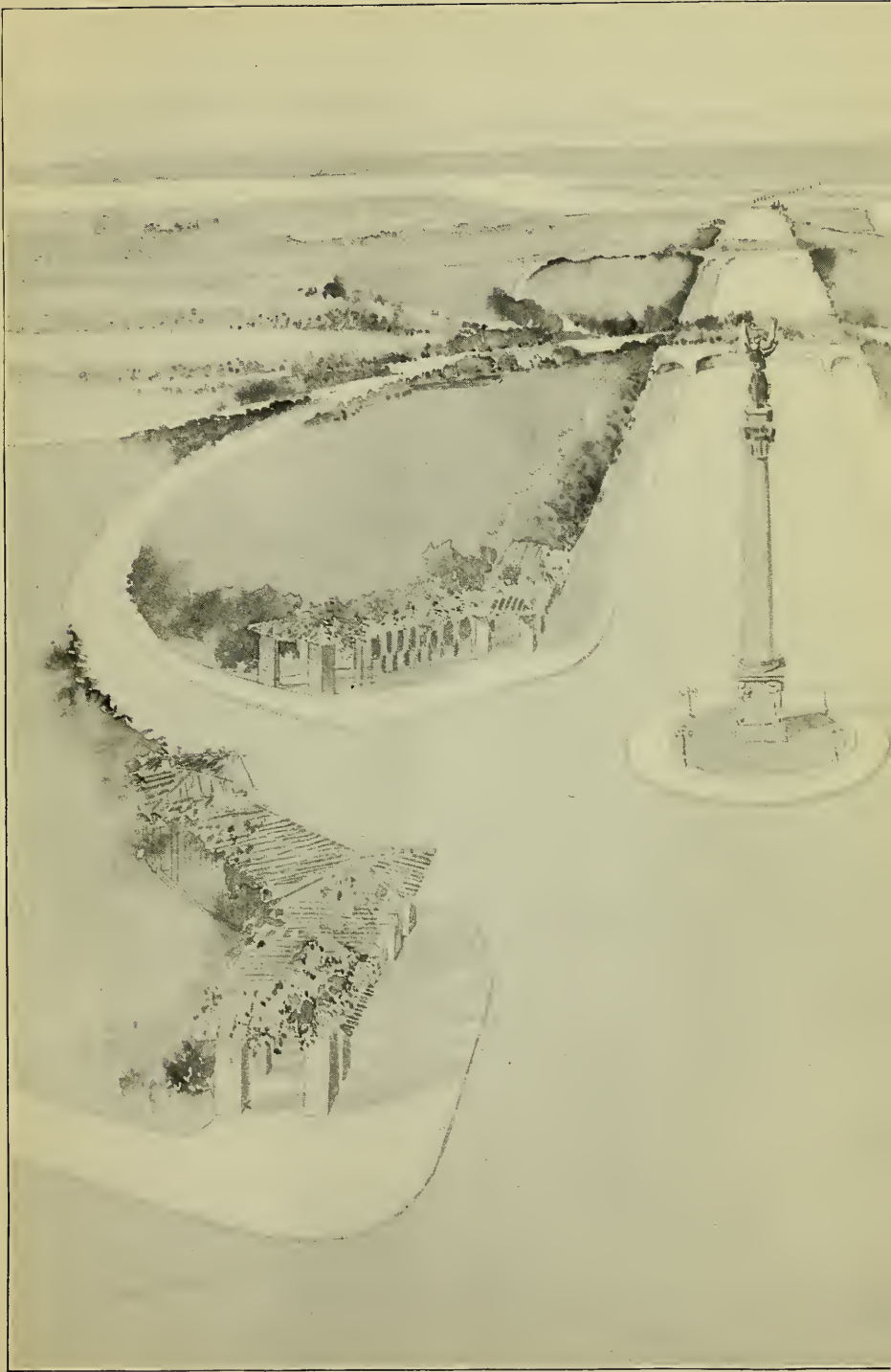
PLAN FOR THE TREATMENT OF THAT SECTION OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SITUATED SOUTH OF PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE AND NORTH OF B STREET SW., WASHINGTON, D. C. ALSO PLAN FOR A SUITABLE CONNECTION BETWEEN POTOMAC AND ZOOLOGICAL PARKS, WASHINGTON, D. C.



PLAN FOR THE TREATMENT OF THAT SECTION OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SITUATED SOUTH OF PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE AND NORTH OF B STREET SW.,
WASHINGTON, D. C. ALSO PLAN FOR A SUITABLE CONNECTION BETWEEN POTOMAC AND ZOOLOGICAL PARKS, WASHINGTON, D. C.

TRANSVERSE ROAD CROSSING FOR THE MALL.





PERSPECTIVE TOWARD SOUTH FROM CORNER OF PENNSYLVANIA

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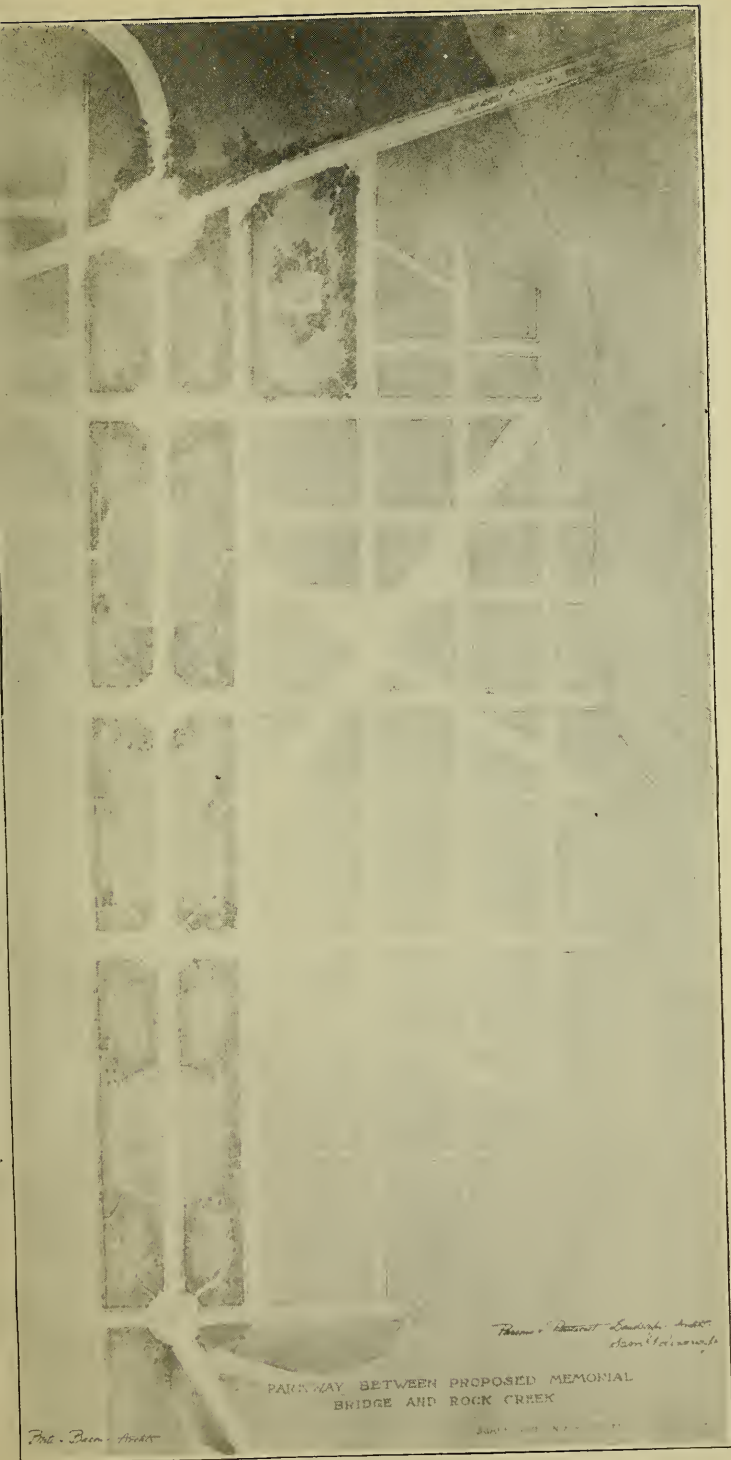
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1844

Received of the
Hon. Secy of the Navy
the sum of \$1000
for the purchase of
the ship "Albatross"
for the service of the
U.S. Navy

Witness my hand
at Washington
this 10th day of
January 1844
John C. Smith
Secretary of the Navy



PLAN SHOWING PROPOSED CONNECTION BETWEEN THE POTOMAC AND
ROCK CREEK

Thos. H. Bacon, Architect

JANUARY 1900

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